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AUTHOR Parker, Anita; Paradis, Edward
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ABSTRACT

To ascertain whether reading attitudes changed as boys and girls progressed through the grades, a reading attitude inventory was administered to 234 children in grades one through six. Items in the inventory were grouped into the following categories: free reading in the classroom, organized reading in the classroom, reading at the library, reading at home, other recreational reading, and general reading. Results indicated no attitude changes from grades one through three nor between grades five and six. The difference found between grades four and five appeared attributable to a more positive attitude toward nonclassroom type reading in grade five. Sex differences approaching statistical significance favored girls; however, no interactions between sex and grade level were reported. (Author/HOD)

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An Examination of Attitude Development Toward Reading in Grades One Through Six

Anita Parker and Edward Paradis

University of Wyoming

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Abstract

Two hundred and thirty-four children in grades one through six were administered a reading attitude inventory to ascertain if attitudes changed as boys and girls progressed through the grades. Results indicated no attitude changes from grades one through three nor between grades five and six. A difference was found between grades four and five which appeared attributable to a more positive attitude toward non-classroom type reading in grade five. Sex differences approaching statistical significance favored girls, however, no interactions between sex and grade level were reported.

While the literature reports studies examining various aspects of reading attitudes (Askov and Fischback, 1973; Dulin and Chester, 1974; Estes, 1971; Engin, et al., 1976; Redelheim, 1976), the development or the change of attitudes for children as they proceed through the elementary school grades has received little attention. The single recent study investigating the development of attitude examined changes during the intermediate grades of four, five, and six (Brown, Engin, and Wallbrown, 1979). Eight dimensions of reading attitude were measured with five dimensions finding significant change. The dimensions exhibiting change

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were: 1) Expressed Reading Difficulty, increasing from grade four to five, 2) Reading Anxiety, increasing from grade four to five, 3) Reading as Direct Reinforcement, indicating a slight increase from grade five to six, 4) Silent vs. Oral Reading, indicating an increased preference for silent reading from grade four to five, and 5) Comics, indicating an increasing preference for comics from grade four to five to six.

Results from Brown et al. indicated measured dimensions of reading attitudes did change through the intermediate grades. No reports, however, were found in the literature examining primary grade children nor were any reports other than Brown located which examined intermediate grade students.

To provide additional information for developmental changes in reading attitudes for elementary school children, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Do attitudes change as children progress from grade one through grade three and from grade four through grade six?
2. Do attitudes differ between boys and girls in the primary grades or boys and girls in the intermediate grades?
3. Do sex by grade interactions occur for reading attitudes in the primary or intermediate grades?

Method

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of children from seven elementary schools in a rural community of 25,000 located in the Rocky Mountain region. The sample was determined by randomly selecting four classes at each grade level to participate in the study. Where the numbers were sufficient, 10 subjects were randomly selected from each of the 24 classrooms. In two

primary grade classrooms, seven children comprised the entire class. Thus, 114 primary grade and 120 intermediate grade children formed the comparison groups.

Measures

Reading attitudes were determined using the Heathington Primary Scale for grades 1-3 and the Heathington Intermediate Scale for grades 4-6 (Heathington, 1975; Alexander and Filler, 1976). A Likert-type scale with five categories of response was used in both instruments. Development for the scales began with individual interviews of 60 children in grades 1-6 to gain initial statements for the measures. Statements from the interviews indicated a need to provide two scales, one for the primary grades and one for the intermediate grades. An item analysis was used to eliminate nondiscriminating statements resulting in a final Primary Scale of 20 items and a final Intermediate Scale of 24 items.

Reliability for the scales was established using a test-retest method. For the primary grades $r = .73$; for the intermediate grades $r = .87$.

Items were grouped into categories for diagnostic purposes. Category names and the number of items in each category were:

	Primary Scale	Intermediate Scale
1. Free reading in the classroom	2	3
2. Organized reading in the classroom	4	2
3. Reading at the library	2	5
4. Reading at home	4	4
5. Other recreational reading	4	3
6. General reading	4	7
	20	24

Alexander (1982) recommended for teachers using the Heathington Scales that scores on the Primary Scale of 80 or above be considered as representing positive responses while scores 40 or below represented negative responses. Scores on the Intermediate Scale of 96 or above were considered to represent positive responses while scores 48 or below represented negative responses. Scores between the positive and negative points represented a neutral range which might indicate mixed feelings. The empirical basis for these recommended interpretations was not reported.

Procedure

All measurements were administered by an investigator during the third week of May. Each class was measured as a group with the investigator reading each item before the children marked a response. Administration time was approximately 10 to 15 minutes in both primary and intermediate grades.

A 2 x 3, sex by grade level, factorial ANOVA was employed to analyze data. Post hoc comparisons were conducted using Tukey's test for Honestly Significant Differences.

Results

No significant differences were observed for attitude scores in grades one, two, and three, $F(2, 108) = 2.238$, $p = .088$. Mean scores for primary grades were: grade 1, $\bar{X} = 77.30$; grade 2, $\bar{X} = 80.95$; grade 3, $\bar{X} = 77.27$.

A significant difference was observed for attitude scores in grades 4, 5, and 6, $F(2, 114) = 3.497$, $p < .05$. A post hoc comparison using Tukey's test revealed a significant difference between grade 4 ($\bar{X} = 73.87$)

and grade 5 ($\bar{X}$ = 83.12) (Tukey value = 3.380, critical value = 3.356). No differences were found between grades 4 and 6 ($\bar{X}$ = 81.75) or grades 5 and 6.

The significant difference between grades 4 and 5 was further analyzed using a two-tailed t-test to compare the differences among the item categories. Significant differences favoring grade 5 were observed for the following categories: Reading at the Library, $t(78) = -2.18$, $p < .05$; Other Recreational Reading, $t(78) = -2.22$, $p < .05$; and General Reading, $t(78) = -1.99$, $p < .05$. As the number of items in these categories were respectively 5, 3, and 7, interpretation should be made with caution.

Significant differences were approached between sexes for both the primary grades $F(1, 108) = 3.845$, $p = .052$ (Male $\bar{X}$ = 76.71, Female $\bar{X}$ = 80.53) and the intermediate grades $F(1, 114) = 3.877$, $p = .051$ (Male $\bar{X}$ = 76.57, Female $\bar{X}$ = 82.68).

No sex by grade interaction was observed for the primary grades, $F(2, 108) = 1.452$, $p. = .239$. Girls reported more positive attitude scores in grade 1 ($\bar{X}$ = 79.28), 2 ($\bar{X}$ = 85.75), and 3 ($\bar{X}$ = 77.28) than boys in grades 1 ($\bar{X}$ = 75.42), 2 ($\bar{X}$ = 77.29), or 3 ($\bar{X}$ = 77.27).

No sex by grade interaction was observed for the intermediate grades, $F(2, 144) = .925$, $p. = .400$. Girls reported more positive attitude scores in grades 4 ($\bar{X}$ = 77.90), 5 ($\bar{X}$ = 88.58), and 6 ($\bar{X}$ = 81.90) than boys in grades 4 ($\bar{X}$ = 69.85), 5 ($\bar{X}$ = 78.18), and 6 ($\bar{X}$ = 81.60).

Discussion

According to Alexander's (1983) criteria, children in grades 1, 2, and 3 were positive at the end of grade 1 and continued in that manner through the end of third grade. For this sample using the Heathington Primary Scale, positive attitudes toward reading appeared to prevail in the primary grades.

In the intermediate grades, reading attitude scores had a significant increase from grade 4 to grade 5 with no apparent change from grade 5 to 6. The attitude scale items with the greatest change from grade 4 to 5 examined library reading, recreational reading, and general reading. The change in attitude appeared more related to an increase in positive attitudes toward nonclassroom reading than to any change in classroom reading.

Brown et al. (1979) also reported changes in attitude between grades 4 and 5. Two dimensions, Expressed Reading Difficulty and Reading Anxiety indicated an increase in children's concern which may have reflected a negative change for classroom-type reading assignments. Two other dimensions, Silent vs Oral Reading and Comics, indicated an increased preference for silent reading and reading comics. These latter two changes could be regarded as additional evidence of a change toward a more positive attitude upon nonclassroom type reading. Nonclassroom reading tends to be silent using less school-related material than classroom reading. Comparison of the Brown et al. study with this study, however, should be done cautiously as different instruments were used to measure attitudes in the two studies.

Throughout grades 1-6, the attitude score for girls tended to be more positive than boys. This tendency supports the work of Askov and Fischback (1973) and Hansen (1969). Caution should be exercised in over-

generalizing from the findings in this study, however, as the mean difference between girls and boys was approximately 4 raw score points in the primary grades and 6 points in the intermediate grades. Alexander and Filler (1976) following a review of attitude differences between sexes, recommended teachers not assume girls have more positive attitudes than boys.

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